

Indiana Department of Environmental Management

Lori F. Kaplan, Commissioner

Open Dumping: Our Common Fight

Swarms of mosquitoes, waterways choked with chemicals and a landscape full of hazards to children. Sound like a bad horror movie? Well, you're close. These are the very real results of illegal dumping. And they're close to home.

The outgrowth of illegal dumping—old tires peppering a riverbank, a refrigerator left to rust along a roadside or an old couch tossed aside into the woods—is fast becoming a fixture in southern Indiana's landscape.

Illegal dumping, sometimes called open dumping, is the disposal of regulated solid waste such as construction or demolition debris, household garbage, appliances, furniture and tires in improper locations.

Every year, each of Indiana's 92 counties reports an average of 70 illegally dumped items. That translates into more than 6,400 appliances, bags of trash, pieces of old furniture and tires that mar some of our most serene locales. Moreover, a great number of dumped items go unreported.

To put this in perspective, each Hoosier generates about one waste tire per year. Many of those tires are not disposed of properly, but instead tossed into rivers and along rural roads where they become breeding grounds for mosquitoes.

Even worse than the tires littering our waterways and open spaces is what you can't see—toxic chemicals spilling into our waterways because of illegal dumping. Paint, cleaners and pesticides are commonly disposed of illegally in southern Indiana. Rains then carry these hazardous materials into the waterways and, sometimes, into your wells.

But it doesn't have to be this way.

On September 20, IDEM kicked off the environmental equivalent of a neighborhood watch in 27 southern Indiana counties. Like the neighborhood watches, where neighbors look out for the safety of one another, this campaign will help keep Indiana clean and safe by using the hands and eyes of those directly affected—you.

While IDEM enforces heavy fines against transgressors and aids in clean-up efforts, we need your help. Any place that does not have a permit to accept regulated waste is an improper dumping location. These sites, as well as individuals who throw their trash into fields and alongside roads, have been a growing problem in southern Indiana.

And that's where you come in.

To report an act of illegal dumping, whether it is an individual or a non-permitted landfill, residents can call a toll-free number, 1-877-985-6556, to alert their solid waste management district of illegal dump sites. The solid waste districts will use this information to clean up sites and catch those individuals who disregard the safety of their neighbors for the sake of convenience.

Don't let your county become a dumpsite. Protect your environment and family by reporting acts of illegal dumping. We at IDEM will do our part. Will you?